

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Sunday July 1, 2018

David Toms



THE MODERATOR: We're very pleased to welcome the champion of the 39th U.S. Senior Open here at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Mr. David Toms. Winning score of 277 at 3-under par. He's the first player to win the Senior Open in his second appearance since Jeff Maggert, 2015, and I'm sure he'll be pleased to hear that he's the seventh U.S. Senior Open champion from Louisiana, first since Philip Barbaree, who is a teammate of his son, Carter, at LSU, who won the 2015 Junior Amateur. And we can give you the details from the other USGA champions from Shreveport, who includes Hal Sutton.

Tremendous birdie on 16 to take the lead at 3-under. And then what Jerry described as a phenomenal putt on 17 to save par. Probably in your mind the critical pieces of the last holes?

DAVID TOMS: Oh, absolutely. I looked at the leaderboard on 16. And I knew that there were quite a few of us. I guess maybe Jimenez, they had a board there, and Jimenez had just birdied the last. I knew there was a bunch of guys at 2. I had a straight uphill putt, a good look at it. I got it going on line. And probably the best rolling putt I've had all week -- no bounces, no nothing, it went straight in the middle. I turned around and hit it in the lip of the bunker on 17. I thought I hit a pretty good drive.

I think it kicked a little left, went in a bad spot. But didn't hit a very good third shot at all. I was in the middle of the fairway. But, like you said, I mean, just an unbelievable putt I made for par. Certainly that was the key to victory.

But really today was a tough day. The wind made it very difficult for us to pull a club. I kept hitting it over the greens and trying to, having to get up-and-down. And I never felt like I was in total control as far as being able to attack the golf course. Even from the fairway, I wasn't able to get the ball close to the pin. I kept bouncing it over the green. So I was getting frustrated with that. But at the same time my short game felt good. And just hung in there. I just wanted to be there at the end to have a chance.

I hadn't been able to get the job done on the Champions Tour. And I was close many times. And I just wanted to be there in the end. And the way it worked out with that putt on 17 and then I played 18

really solid. To be able to win the tournament. It's very rewarding. It's a great place. It's a great venue. I enjoyed my week. And obviously to get a victory is even more special.

THE MODERATOR: Before we take questions, what was your estimate on the length of that putt on 17?

DAVID TOMS: I'm guessing 20 feet. I'm not really sure what it was. It was kind of downhill, right to left. I adjusted my line on my ball. I wasn't playing enough break. And I knew I needed to hit it soft. I played a little more break. It just got on a great line and tracked right in.

I know you guys don't know this, but late in the day, if you could just see what it looks like around the cup. It can get really visually intimidating because you don't feel like the ball's going to roll very good.

The greens get spiked up and beat up. It's great playing late in the day. It means you're playing well, but it's a tough surface to putt on. And to be able to make the two putts on 16 and 17 with the greens the way they've got late in the day, I guess it was meant to be.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You might be the only one who made long putts of any consequence this whole week. So is there anything to putting at the Broadmoor? The other one, though, in the bunker on 17 -- there was a lot of comparisons being made to your PGA Championship. Did that come into your mind? And also did you have any choices on that bunker shot?

DAVID TOMS: The first question, I don't think there's any secret to putting here. You give it the best. I knew that it was going to be tough before the week started. I was at an outing that Scott Verplank had and I was on an airplane with Tom Pernice, and he had an 8-by-10 striker line of every green. And he was studying it on the airplane before we even got to the Broadmoor.

I knew what we were in for. I knew there weren't any flat spots. I knew there was mountains here. And I just did a good job of just getting into what I was doing, not get ahead of myself. I don't think there's any trick to it. I just think speed is very important when you're putting

on these greens, and my speed got better and better as the week went on.

As far as the comparison to the PGA Championship, that was the first thing that popped into my mind after I had to hit the shot out of the bunker, I was in the middle of the fairway, I'm still in good shape. It's normally a par-5, just like 18 at the Athletic Club was. So I need to go make a birdie.

I hit a terrible wedge shot, to be honest with you, but it was really hard to control the ball it was bouncing all over the greens. It hit pin high, and I pulled it and it bounced 20 feet past and I was lucky enough to make it.

Q. I think it had been a little more than seven years since you won the Crowne Plaza. And you won 13 times on the PGA TOUR. Can you draw on that experience even though it's that far in the distance of the past, were there similar feelings that you said, okay, I think I know how to deal with this?

DAVID TOMS: Listen, I try to draw on those experiences all the time. I've been trying to do that since I started on the Champions Tour. Like I said, I've been close. I mean, I played in the last group last week on Sunday.

You know, guys are just playing so well. And like I said they've all won tournaments. And the ones -- like Jerry, he's obviously very comfortable. He's already won quite a few times on the Champions Tour. He's probably more comfortable out there today than I was, even though he had the lead and he had played with it all week, basically.

But he had been able to get it done and I hadn't. And until you're able to you have that doubt. And I always try to draw on those positive experiences. I thought a lot about the International this week, winning there in 1999 at Castle Pines. I thought of my son, played there on Wednesday, so I kind of thought about that a lot.

In fact, what I thought about over the last putt that I had on 18 was that year that I won the International, I had to 2-putt to win and I had a downhill right-to-left breaking putt just like I had. And I actually made it that year in '99.

And I thought I had made this one. Kind of skirted the right edge. So it's funny. He asked me about the PGA and you asked me. I thought about both things on the last two holes. So you can tell that I was always trying to draw on something positive from the past.

Q. Do you remember the last time you putted this

well under pressure?

DAVID TOMS: No. It's been a while. I mean, that's kind of what's held me back the last couple of years of winning out here. You have to be patient, because a lot of the courses that we play, I have a lot more chances for birdie than I did the last few years I played the PGA TOUR because the golf courses are shorter.

So a lot of times you get up there and you keep hitting it 15 feet, you don't make it, you don't make it, and you get frustrated. But this week putting was so difficult that I got into every single putt. And I didn't get frustrated because I knew it was tough for everyone, and nobody was lighting it up and going really low. So that helped me.

And, I don't know, it's been a while since I've made putts that I really had to make to win a golf tournament, no doubt about that.

Q. After the bogey on 13, when everybody bunches up together, I think it was five players at that point, what were you thinking about on the tee on 14?

DAVID TOMS: Let me think back. 13, that's the hole where I hit it in the front bunker. I hit it just in the right rough. I thought I hit a good drive and I guess it kicked a little right. So I was in a tough spot. And I hit it in the bunker and didn't hit a very good bunker shot, really, to be honest. It was running away. I didn't hit a very good one. Hit an even worse putt -- it just bounced right off the get-go and never had a chance.

But I knew -- I knew that -- I really thought at the time, if I just parred the rest of the holes I would have a chance, because that's how difficult everything was playing. I was fine with it. I felt like my short game was good. I was driving it good. So I was fine. My emotions were really good. I was still right next to Jerry. We were probably tied. So I didn't have a problem with where I stood.

So I just knew I just had to keep moving forward, because it was a tough golf course this afternoon.

Q. Can you kind of explain the mindset when you're in a five-way tie with a couple of holes to play at the Senior Open? Does it become a different kind of competitive environment, or is it still just you and the course?

DAVID TOMS: You're trying to stay in the moment. But you've got to figure -- even if you're tied, what's the worst thing that's going to happen? You're going to get in a playoff with a bunch of guys and at least you have a chance. You just want to have a chance. Even if that's being tied and having to win in a playoff, you prepare for those things.

And I played all day long. You're grinding every shot. You're still right where you need to be. I mean, that's the positive thing, not that I'm tied with a bunch of people.

But it's good that I'm still where I need to be that late in the round. And rather than just getting off to a horrible start and shooting yourself out of it on the front nine, I was right where I wanted to be, with a chance. And so I looked at it like, hey, if I make a birdie, I'm even in better shape. And that's what happened.

Q. Did you have a number in mind or anything like that starting the day?

DAVID TOMS: You know, not really, because I just -- I knew it was going to be difficult. We warmed up with the wind blowing hard left to right. Even the first tee shot, it's in left to right on a ball that you need to turn over to get into the fairway.

And it's like a bowling alley that first shot. And, of course, I leaked a little right in the rough first hole and had to get up-and-down for par.

I knew it was going to be tough. I was playing with Jerry, who was the leader. So I felt like -- and he led all week, so he was playing good -- I felt if I stayed close to him, I was going to have a chance. And that's the way it worked out.

Q. You said earlier in your career you weren't as patient perhaps as you could have been in the U.S. Open. Now you win the U.S. Senior Open. That gets you into next year's U.S. Open at Pebble Beach. What's that mean to be back in the U.S. Open for the first time in a few years?

DAVID TOMS: It's awesome. I've played in, I don't know how many U.S. Opens I've played in, but I've played in a bunch. I've gone many years where I was exempt for it, which was nice. You didn't have to do that 36-hole qualifier, but I've played that 36-hole qualifier in Memphis, Tennessee in the middle of the summer and it's a long day, but I've made it numerous times.

It's a great golf tournament. And Pebble Beach is a special place, obviously. And I look forward to being a part of that. I know my wife loves Carmel. So we'll be excited to be there for sure.

Q. You looked pretty emotional out there a couple times. Wonder if you could maybe discuss the range of emotions of this week and winning.

DAVID TOMS: It's been all over the place. I mean, if you think about how my week started, well, the first day anyway, I'm literally -- I'm walking over to the clubhouse and I hear that my caddie is going to the hospital

because he had a heart condition.

So I'm scrambling him around. My wife says, Carter, my son, he's ready to go, he's going to caddie for you. He's never caddied before in his life. Now, he's carried his own bag and plays college golf. That's how my week started, not knowing what was wrong with my caddie, what was going to happen.

My son caddying for me. I'm playing with Davis Love and Vijay Singh. I go up to them before the round and I'm apologizing: If he gets in your way just yell at him, whatever, he can take it.

Every time I hit it in the bunker, I never wanted to hit it in the bunker because I didn't want to see what he was going to -- rake job and all that kind of stuff. I didn't want to be the bad person there. So that's the way it started.

But he did an unbelievable job. He really kept me in there, especially on Friday, where I was three-over par early in the round. He was so positive. It was like -- it's like me talking to him when he was going to play. He was talking back to me.

And I finished really good that round and ended up shooting only 1-over par when it could have gone way the other way. So he did an awesome job. I just have to figure out now what percentage each of them gets. That ought to be interesting.

So just going through that and then making some big putts at the end of the day today, which I haven't done in a long time. And after I made the one on 16, I mean, I was like trying to breathe to hit that tee shot on 17. And it's such a hard tee shot. I'm just like, oh, my goodness, just get yourself together.

And then I made the putt on 17. Had to go through it again. I got to 18. And that's a hard tee shot. I'm trying to figure out if I've got a 5-wood or 3-wood. Caddie says I like 3-wood. I know I have to move it left to right or it's going to go through the fairway. And it did by about four inches.

Then I had that putt. I had a 20-foot putt downhill, all I have to do is 2-putt and touch it to get it to the hole and it sneaks down there two feet past the hole. Now I've got to make that one. And I'm shaking. It was just so hard.

I know you guys hear people talk about it all the time. You don't actually have to do it. But when you haven't done it in a while, it's pretty brutal. And I'm just glad I got it done.

Q. That final putt on 18, watching your face, it

looked like for a moment you actually thought you were going to miss the hole. Was that actually the case?

DAVID TOMS: On the second putt?

Q. The final putt on 18.

DAVID TOMS: Well, just next time you're hitting a putt, just shake real, real hard and try to take it back and knock it in. It's hard, I mean it really is. I felt great. The thing is I felt great all day on the greens. Not once was I nervous. I wasn't thinking about anything. I was very calm. And then all of a sudden I've got a two-footer uphill on poa annua greens to win the U.S. Senior Open. So you just get ahead of yourself. And lucky enough -- I think if it was three feet it wouldn't have gone in because I didn't hit it in the middle, I hit it on the right side and it's moving right. If it's two and a half feet, it probably wouldn't have gone in. But it went in. And I'm here. So I'm happy.

Q. I was wondering if you had ever been involved where you had a police escort before with motorcycles and sirens flashing on your way from the club over to here?

DAVID TOMS: It was great. Now I know what Nick Saban feels like. (Laughter). No, that was nice. This whole week's been very, very nice. I know it's easy to say that as a champion of the event. You're up here at the end. But Broadmoor, I'd never been here before. I've always come to Colorado to Vail area to ski and come up for the summer. And I played in Denver many times. But what a nice place. And I see what it's all about now. And I look forward to coming back.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.